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ABSTRACT

The Sydney Public Library began as the Australian Subscription Library and Reading Room which opened in Sydney on December 1, 1827, with 1,000 volumes. The Municipal Council of Sydney took possession of the library in 1909. The library evolved from a closed access, fixed shelf position library to an open access system in 1910. A complete retrospective conversion to the Dewey system was achieved by 1933. Over the years the library initiated a newspaper reading room, a juvenile collection, a children's room, an inquiry desk, a bindery, and various other features, mirroring the development of public libraries, especially in the United States and Great Britain. Public support for public libraries was limited until the 1930s, with public libraries being viewed as a luxury. The Free Library Movement of that time helped to solidify support for such institutions. The years following World War II brought more change with the opening of several branches in the suburbs around the city and a resultant rise in circulation. In December, 1976 cataloging and circulation were computerized, and microfiche catalogs were produced until June, 1986, when the library went to an online catalog and circulation system. Budgetary and circulation data are given throughout the document, and a bibliography of 29 items is provided. (PPB)

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A HISTORY OF THE CITY OF SYDNEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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CONTENTS

Chapter I	Origins	1
Chapter II	Advent of the Sydney Municipal Library	5
Chapter III	Growth 1914-1934	12
Chapter IV	Growing Awareness of the Importance of Libraries 1934-1939	27
Chapter V	World War II	35
Chapter VI	Branching Out 1946-1968	39
Chapter VII	Recent Times 1969 to the Present	53
Bibliography		60

Chapter 1 - Origins

The first semi-public library in the Colony of New South Wales opened in 1810 and was housed on the property of the Reverend Samuel Marsden at Parramatta. In 1809 Marsden asked for some books from friends when he was in England for "the benefit of the Colonists and their children", and which "was [to be] the foundation of a public Library". Upon his return Marsden took the books to Parramatta, built a small room "near my Garden ... in order that every Person might have free access to them at all times" and even occasionally leant books to individuals.[1]

This library proved inadequate to meet the Colonists' reading requirements and Commissioner Bigge himself recommended "... the establishment of a Public Library to consist of books carefully selected and confined to particular subjects which subjects it is obvious from the nature of the Colony should be Divinity and Morals, History, Voyages and Lands, Agriculture in all its branches, Mineralogy and Practical Mechanics".[2]

[1] Bigge Reports Appendix v. 127 pp. 5629-31 B.T. Box 25

[2] Bigge Report Appendix pp. 142-144 B.T. Box 12

On Frebruary 3, 1826 ten gentlemen met in Sydney to discuss the question of founding a 'Reading Room and Circulating Library'. "They agreed to pool their resources in the way of books, and to put up money to obtain more". In April an order for books was sent to London. "The great 'quarterlies' had precedence, and theology, science, history, biography and travels followed in order". It opened as 'The Australian Subscription Library and Reading Room' on December 1, 1827, with one thousand volumes, at 86 Pitt Street in the offices of the management of the Sydney Dispensary. In fact, the first Librarian, Peter Cooke, "combined the functions of librarian with those of dispenser of medicine".[3]

On 7th August, 1835 Governor Richard Bourke wrote to the Earl of Aberdeen seeking "permission to propose to the Council of this Colony the appropriation of money for the erection of a Building to serve as a Library and Museum and to be placed in conexion with the Sydney Botanical Garden ... [at a cost that] will not exceed four thousand pounds ..."[4]

[3] "The Sydney Free Public Library" in Australian Town and Country Journal Sept. 28, 1889:p 31

[4] Transcripts of Missing Despatches from the Governor of N.S.W. 1833-1838. MLA 1267-5 CY Reel 695 (pp 513-1045)

Nothing was to come of this proposal for in 1843 the foundation stone of the present State Library in Bent Street was laid. Expense proved too much for private enterprise, so the Government eventually bought the building and books of the Australian Subscription Library in 1869 and on October 1, 1869 it became the Free Public Library of Sydney with a grant of £2,000 per annum.[5]

In his 'Historical Notes of the Public Library of New South Wales, 1826-1906'[6] the late F.M. Bladen traces the history of this institution and suffice to say we find the genesis of the Lending Branch of the Free Public Library, which afterwards became the Sydney Municipal Library.

On 9th February, 1874 the Trustees alluded to establishing a Lending Branch in their third annual report. In March, 1876 an order was sent to England for two thousand volumes (costing £500) by the Trustees to form the basis of a collection for the proposed Lending Branch. On 3rd July, 1877, a branch was opened for this purpose in the basement of the main building. In 1881 the Lending branch was moved into the former Presbyterian Church building in Macquarie Street, adjoining Parliament House, the librarian being E.W.Palmer. Here the Library remained until 1899, when it was moved to the second floor of the Queen Victoria Market Buildings.[7]

5 Daily Telegraph 2.7.1927 in City of Sydney Public Library Cuttings. v.1 p.40

6 Bladen, F.M. Public Library of New South Wales: Historical notes commemorative of the building of the Mitchell wing. Sydney: Gov.Pr., 1906

7 Ibid. pp. 40-51

The hours during which the Branch was opened, at first, were from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. The time was extended on 1st January, 1880, to from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. "This alteration was found very acceptable to the working classes, who were unable, under the former regulations, to avail themselves to any large extent of the advantages offered".[8] Incidentally, books were mailed to students in the country and the first Braille books for the blind were ordered in 1882 - two significant innovations catering for special users!

The Collection in 1880 ranged from National Philosophy, Science and the Arts, through to Geography, History, Poetry and Drama, and all largely written by English writers.[9] In 1899 membership stood at 8,675 and the number of books borrowed was 110,548, loans later rising to 138,896 in 1905 and membership to 9,687.[10] The number of volumes available for loan totalled 29,121 in 1905 - a very high rate of circulation considering the small size of the collection and which was to be a continuing feature of the Sydney Municipal Library.

8 Ibid. p.46

9 Catalogue of the Lending Branch/Free Public Library, Sydney, for 1880. Sydney: Gov. Pr., 1881

10 Bladen, F.M. op cit. p.47

Chapter II - Advent of the Sydney Municipal Library

By Act of Parliament entitled 'The Sydney Corporation Amendment Act of 1908', the books, fittings, etc. of the Lending Branch of the Public Library were vested in the Municipal Council of Sydney from 22nd December, 1908, and on 15th October, 1909, the Council entered into possession.[1]

Prior to the transfer, the Council had appointed a sub-committee to plan the organization of the Library, and the recommendations of this sub-committee were adopted by the Council. The members of the sub-committee consisted of four aldermen and not one librarian. The committee stipulated that, as the aims of the Library were educational, the funds should be devoted primarily to works of a literary, scientific or formative character, "and that no money should be devoted to the purchase of fiction". Referring to the general organization of the Library, the sub-committee suggested that a catalogue of the stock be prepared, and a temporary staff be appointed for this purpose. It also advocated the appointment of one book repairer, one book cleaner and one floor cleaner. A specific reference was made to the possibility of introducing 'open access' borrowing, but the sub-committee stated that it did not favour the adoption of this system, at least for the present.[2] Bladen, Principal Librarian

1 Bertie, C.H. Notes on the History to 1914. Sydney Municipal Library (n.p.n.d.)

2 Proceedings of the Municipal Council of the City of Sydney during the year 1907. Sydney: Pr., 1908 p.361

of the Public Library had, on the other hand, recommended at the time of transfer that "under the new regime steps should be taken to classify the books under a modification of the Dewey System, with a view to the adoption of the American plan of 'Open Access". This might obviate the need of periodical printed catalogues, which become more cumbrous, unsatisfactory, and expensive each year."[3]

One further recommendation of the sub-committee was that "the daily morning papers from the State Capitals, together with the evening papers of Sydney, be taken, also the London Weekly Times".[4] As we shall soon see, the Newspaper Room was to be a major draw-card for the Library, and to provide a very worthwhile service to the community.

The conditions of membership were that any person above twelve years of age became an eligible borrower when he or she produced a form signed by one of the following: an MLC, an MLA, the Lord Mayor of Sydney, an Alderman, the Town Clerk or Librarian, head Master or Principal of any College or School, a Professor or lecturer or the Registrar of the University of Sydney or the Technical College, a Minister of Religion, a permanent head of a Government Department or department of the Council.[5]

3 Bladen, F.M. "Report on the Transfer of the Lending of the Public Library to the City Council". Reports and Proceedings of the Municipal Council of the City of Sydney during the year 1909. p.633

4 Proceedings of the Municipal Council ... 1907 p.361

5 Sydney Municipal Library: By-Laws. Government Gazette No.103 29.6.1910 p.888

The Library's hours of opening were 10.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. on every day except Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday. The borrower had to hand over his Library ticket upon borrowing a book. The borrower could either replace a lost book or pay the Council the full value of the book. Only one volume could be borrowed at a time, or two volumes of one work at the discretion of the Librarian. Loans were made for fourteen days, with fines of 1d each day for overdue books.[6]

In September, 1909, Charles H. Bertie was appointed Librarian by the Town Clerk, T.H. Nesbitt. Charles Bertie took up his appointment on 1st October, 1909, and officially assumed control of the Library, on behalf of the Council, for the Government on 15th October,1909.[7]

The state of the Library, which Bertie inherited, was in an appalling condition. As Bertie says, "no acquisitions had occurred for years, [and] a lot of the collection needed binding. No weeding [of the collection] had occurred since 1877 when the Library was established".[8] A stock-take indicated that of the 30,000 books in the collection, only 23,000 were fit for circulation.[9]

6 Ibid. pp 887-917

7 Bertie, C.H. Notes on the History to 1914. op cit

8 Bertie, C.H. "The Organization of a Lending Library" Proceedings of the Australian Library Conference. Aug. 1928. Melbourne: Gov. Printer, 1928. p.15

9 Annual Report of the City Librarian 1910 [Hereafter all the annual reports of the City Librarian will be referred to simply as the Annual Report. Copies are held in the Library. Most of the Reports do not have their pages numbered. The annual reports ceased to be published in 1974.]

Total number of books as per Stock-take: 30,064

Less -

Books in binding	2,738	
Books are returned by borrowers	46	
Books worn out	3,663	
Books missing	48	6,495
Total books available for circulation		23,569

Immediately the Council voted £1,000 to purchase new books in 1909 and in 1909 to 1910 £1.400 was spent on 4,400 new volumes. Before the Library re-opened, the rooms were cleaned and repainted, and electricity was installed in place of the old gas lighting.[10]

The system of borrowing at the time was based on the closed access and fixed-location. The position of every book in the Library was duplicated on a Library Recorder (the Chivers Indicator), which was divided into 25 parallel sections, each numbered to represent one shelf. These sections were further divided into 200 sub-divisions, each representing one book on the shelf. The Recorders thus had 5,000 divisions, each of which contained a small slip giving the number of the book to which it corresponded. If the book was on the shelves the slip was visible; if the slip was drawn back, the book was unavailable for loan.[11]

10 Bertie, C.H. Notes on the History to 1914. op cit

11 Ibid.

A borrower would first have to go to the catalogue to find shelf and position number of the book; then to the Recorder, to ascertain availability; then to the counter, where an application for the book is made out and handed to an attendant who, in turn, retrieves the book, adjusts the indicator, returns to the counter and enters the necessary records in the loan book. "The borrowers had no opportunity of examining the books before taking them out",says Bertie, "but had to trust to the catalogue!"[12]

From his appointment, Bertie strongly recommended replacing this cumbersome loans system with the 'open access' system, previously advocated by Bladen, which was gaining favour in the U.S.A. and the U.K. Finally, on 18th october, 1910, open-access book cases were bought with new and rebound books being transferred to this section. The only disadvantage of the new system that Bertie could think of was the "opportunity [given] for unscrupulous persons to steal books".[13]

During 1910 a comprehensive card catalogue was introduced, as well as printed class catalogues, which borrowers could purchase for 1d each.[14]

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Annual Report, 1910

Bertie made a "mistake" and selected the Duff Brown classification system as opposed to the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme. The collection was broadly classified as follows:-

A - Natural Science
AX - Useful Arts
AY - Fine and Recreative Arts
B - History
C - Biography
D - Geography, topography, etc.
E - Social Science
F - Philosophy and Religion
G - Poetry and Drama
H - Fiction
J - Literature
K - Miscellaneous
M - Juvenile
FT - Foreign Text

With a growing collection and greatly increased use of the Library from 1914 onwards, this system was too cumbersome. Only in 1919 did the Library finally change to Dewey, which resulted in two sets of catalogues and collections until 1933, when retrospective cataloguing was finally completed.[15]

The Library space was divided between the Library proper which was 134' x 25' and the Newspaper room, which was 56' x 25'. "These rooms", wrote Bertie in 1909, "are totally inadequate and unsuitable for the purpose of a library".[16] This was to be a recurrent theme in all City Librarians' reports and comments right down to this very day. Nevertheless, despite the inadequacy of the library's surroundings, as

[15] Bertie, C.H. "The Organization of a Lending Library" op cit p.16

[16] Annual Report 1909

a major institution in the City of Sydney it was to enjoy exceptional popularity and patronage in the following years. Instance the number of books issued from 1910 to 1914:

1910	1911	1912	1913	1914 [17]
52,767	103,621	118,303	108,930	175,254

The fall in loans in 1913 was attributable to a Small Pox epidemic, which closed the Library from 9th July to 17th October.

Interestingly, the Newspaper Room in 1910 was patronised by 262,108 men and only 10,572 women. This is the only annual report which breaks down patronage of the Library by sex. Was the low number of women attending the Newspaper Room due to a lower level of literacy amongst women in comparison to men, or that newspapers dealt largely with 'politics' when women probably had a lower political consciousness than men; or was it 'socially' unacceptable to sit in a reading room with men; or was it because women had less time than men to read, particularly since so many women were confi d to the home rearing children and housekeeping?

[17] Bertie, C.H. Notes on the History to 1914. op cit.

Chapter III - Growth 1914-1934

According to the 1914 Annual Report the beginning of the First World War caused a decline in reading for a few months, but the effect of this influence was only transitory and loans reached 175,254 in 1914. Out of total of 15,306 books in circulation, Natural Science accounted for 1,086, the Useful Arts 2,127 Biography 1,011, Social Sciences 1366, Fiction 3177 and the Juvenile Section 1,576.[1] Although fiction has always remained the largest single category of this library's loans, and probably in most other public library's in Australia for that matter, nevertheless serious reading in the non-fiction areas was established early.

Already Charles Bertie was thinking about and positing "a new conception of the function of a library", hoping that it would follow "the best examples in England and America". He quoted, in his Annual Report, Dr. Bostwick, Librarian of St. Louis Public Library in these words:

> "The modern public library believes that it should find a reader for every book on its shelves and a book for every reader in its community ... This is the meaning of the great multiplication of facilities in the modern library - the lending of books for home use, free access to shelves, cheerful and homelike library buildings, rooms for children, co-operation with schools, inter-library loans, longer hours of opening, more

[1] Annual Report 1914

useful catalogues and lists,
the extension of branch-library
system ..."

Sometime ago Bertie had made a significant move by forming a juvenile section as part of the Library. It held 1,184 volumes in 1914 and loans for the year totalled 31,236 volumes.[2] However, as Bertie indicated, the Library really needed a children's room. "The personal contact which arises through a children's room", wrote Bertie, "enables the librarian in charge to exert a direct influence over the reading of the boys and girls. Moreover, their absence from the main library ensures a quieter atmosphere and more room for the adults".[3]

Bertie also wanted a lecture room to seat 2000 to 3000 people so that during lectures "the usual custom is to distribute amongst the audience a list of the works in the library bearing on the subject of the lecture". In other words, Bertie was aiming to make the Sydney Municipal Library a vital part of Sydney's cultural and intellectural scene, as well as promoting the library's services through community programmes and events. He even proposed establishing a"small reference library principally where businessmen may receive information on matters that concern them ..." when a new library building is erected. Unfortunately his present "congested" building was to prevent many of his ideas from bearing fruition.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

Loans increased to total 203,361 in 1915, with a two per cent increase in "the Social Sciences sections, due no doubt to the demand for books in this section bearing on the war".[4] Even loan figures in the Juvenile section rose dramatically from 37,361 in 1915 to 51,233 in 1916. Bertie observed that "during the year ... the number of adult borrowers taking books from this section has greatly increased, due no doubt to the craving for lighter literature under war stress".[5] Membership stood at 22,122 in 1917-18 compared with 14,053 in 1915-16.[6]

In 1918, when the Queen Victoria Building was being re-modelled, it was suggested that the Library move into the old concert hall at the northern end of the building. Two extra floors were erected within the hall, one of which provided for the Newspaper Room, and the other for administrative offices. Further space was obtained by the removal of one of the lifts, and that area was set aside for a separate Children's Room. The new premises were opened on 18th March, 1918, by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Joynton Smith.[7]

4 Annual Report 1915

5 Annual Report 1916

6 Annual Report 1917-18

7 Ibid.

Seating accommodation was provided in the Newspaper room, which attracted 800-900 people a day to consult the 430 newspapers and magazines from all over the world to which the Library subscribed.[8] The Newspaper Room proudly contained a complete back set of the 'Sydney Morning Herald', as well as a collection of press cuttings on Australians of note and Australia, which was started in 1910, and is still maintained today.

The opening of the new Children's Room was a very successful innovation, and copied, by a number of librarians from other States. The Sydney Morning Herald sympathetically described this opening:

> "When the doors were opened on Monday boys and girls crowded in, breasting the brand new polished counters, and exchanging books, and booking numbers went on right merrily ... Brightness and cleanliness are the dominant notes [of the new quarters], pretty pictures on the walls, gaily bound books on new shelves... a convenient wash basin ... The minimum age of a youthful reader is supposed to be 12, but this is elastic, according to the judgment of the staff ...[and] this book-borrowing... teaches the child responsibility in preserving public property, it helps to give him pride as a citizen in possessing such institutions, it develops a civic conscience ..."[9]

8 Annual Report 1919

9 Sydney Morning Herald 20.3.1918 p.2

This theme of the well-educated citizen being assisted in his/her development by the availability of free information through public libraries, was a leitmotiv of the Sydney Municipal Library from its earliest days and was to reappear dramatically in the 1930's in a wider library context.

1918 as a year also saw the introduction of an Inquiry Desk in the Main Library. Staffed by one of the assistants at the Charging (Loans) Desk, the officer had the responsibility of assisting borrowers in the use of the catalogue and in the choice of books, as well as compiling bibliographies on specialised subjects, and answering queries on general knowledge[10]. This innovation is a significant development in library practice, representing a systematic attempt to assist a user locate information relevant to his or her needs or requirements, and was hereafter a major facet of library routines.

Early in 1920 Charles Bertie recommended the introduction of wicket gates, as a means of reducing the number of books lost through theft.[11] The gates were installed in 1921, and at the end of that year, the number of books missing totalled 1,322 (nearly 300 more than in 1920!). Moreover circulation fell from 456,483 loans in 1921 to 426,967 in 1922, a decrease of 29,516.

10 Annual Report 1919

11 Annual Report 1922

"This decrease may be attributed to the introduction of the wicket gates at the beginning of 1922", wrote Bertie. The gates apparently created "queues" and "I think we lost a number of borrowers from this cause".[12]

In an endeavour to relieve this congestion, the Library discarded the Browne Charging system in 1923, and introduced the Newark system. The Browne system consisted of book cards in the back of each book. The borrower's ticket wasslipped into a pocket on the book card. The book card was filed on the accession numbers, behind a guide bearing the day of the month (each book card had the book's accession number written on it). The Newark system provided the borrower with a ticket which is ruled and printed to allow the date of borrowing and return, and this ticket was not kept by the Library, but returned to the borrower. The ticket was slipped into the pocket in the back of the book. On the return of the book there was no necessity to hunt up the book card. The Charging Desk assistant checks the dates on the book label and the borrwer's ticket and stamps the ticket under the return column.[13]

At the end of 1924 there were 45,034 books in stock, but over the previous two years 2,158 books had been stolen, a problem Bertie attributes to "the aftermath of the war".[14] 1924 was also a record year

12 Ibid.

13 Bertie, C.H. The Organization of a Lending Library op cit. pp. 16-17

14 Annual Report 1923-1924

of issues, reaching 461,088 volumes, which was the highest number issued since the opening of the Library in 1877. A subject breakdown of daily loans in 1924 indicates that the Library was asked daily for 36 general scientific books; 80 useful arts; 53 on fine arts; 40 historical works; 41 biographical; 42 works on travel and geography; 44 works on social sciences; 39 on religion and philosophy; 69 books of poetry and drama; 642 works of fiction; 77 dealing with literature and language; and 360 books from the Juvenile Library, which includes both fiction and non-fiction.[15]

These figures would indicate that the average user was not only seeking simple recreational reading in the form of fiction books, but also serious educational and cultural information on quite a high scale.

In 1925 the Council decided to instal a bindery in the Library, instead of sending the books out on contract. A new room was built on the roof of the Library, which was the only remaining space, and as equipment and machinery were installed, the first two sewers were employed on 3rd February, 1926. By then it had a staff of 3 men, 4 women, 2 apprentices and a foreman. In 1927 it had rebound 6,864 books and 6,862 new books were numbered, blocked and pocketed.[16]

15 Ibid.

16 Annual Reports, 1925 and 1926 plus Bertie, C.H. The Organization of a Lending Library. op cit.p. 21

The bindery was not finally completed and occupied until 28th April, 1926.

In 1927 the Library commenced the publication of a regular "Monthly Accessions" list of new books added to the Library with a view to advertising the institution. Copies of the first list were sent out in November to 444 business houses with a letter requesting that the pamphlets be placed in the recreation rooms of the employees, and offering to continue the supply of monthly lists should the firm be interested. Surplus copies of the lists were sold to borrowers for 2d each. In 1928 an extra 2,000 new members registered with the Library, the increase being attributed directly to the publicity gained by distributing the accessions lists. At the end of the year it was decided that no more value could be obtained from the lists as an advertising agency, and they were discontinued.[17]

Not only did membership increase during 1927-28, but loans also substantially rose by 50,810 to total 478,211 for the year. The subject categories

[17] Annual Reports 1927 and 1928

borrowed by users were as follows:

Section	% of Issues[18]
Religion	1.3
Social Science	3.22
Science	2.85
Useful Arts	6.05
Fine & Recreative Arts	4.54
Literature, Poetry and Drama	11.35
Geography and Travel	3.98
Biography	3.59
History	2.97
Fiction	38.50
Juvenile Section	18.59

The low number of items loaned dealing with religion probably indicates the overall low level of religious sentiment in the Australian people, a characteristic dating back to 1788.

What were some of the topics people in 1928 were interested in? Queries received at the Inquiry Desk included works of Michael Faraday, books on poultry, the author and name of the poem 'The Hermit, the Angel, and the Man', wheat-growing in Australia, books on leather manufacture, on organ playing, upholstery, cabinet making, the economic value of the eucalyptus, financial conditions of France and Germany before the War, a children's history of the War, books on education and democracy, and a criticism of the 'Canterbury Tales'.[19]

[18] Annual Report 1928

[19] Bertie, C.H. The Organization of a Lending Library op. cit. p. 19

Inquiries therefore ranged from items of general interest to very practical questions, and from hobbies through to education and significant world issues and events.

The officer in charge of the Inquiry Desk was by this time the cataloguer - "a useful arrangement", according to Bertie, "as this officer is closely in touch with all new books". Inquiries could also indicate "weak points of the collection". Obviously at this stage in the Library's history the rate of acquisitions was not great enough to prevent the cataloguer from spending time on the Inquiry Desk. Moreover, Bertie did not see the "reference side" of the Library as constituting the "raison d'etre of its existence", for he correctly saw the role of intensive reference assistance and research being the responsibility and function of the State Library in Macquarie Street.[20]

Other innovatory reader assistance practices adopted by the Library at this time included the introduction of a "new book" case for the display of newly acquired titles and a loans reservation system. The latter provided a borrower "desiring to reserve a book" with a specially printed post-card upon which he pays a penny for postage". The would-be borrower was notified by post when the book was available for loan. Borrowers were also "invited" to offer suggestions for new books, "and have a special card for the purpose ... Where the

[20] Ibid. p.19

suggestion is adopted, the person suggesting is given the first reserve on the book". [21]

One trend that was to become apparent at the end of the decade was a decreased attendance in the Children's Library and a decline in the number of children's books issued. In 1929 children's book loans declined by 8,456.[22] This was mainly due to the wholesale resumption of land in the inner City for business expansion, so that more and more families were forced to move out to the suburbs and further away from the Library; and also to "the removal of the High Schools from the City".[23] Two of the largest schools, Sydney Girls' High and Sydney Boys' High, had both moved out to Moore park during the 1920's.

Another unfavourable trend was the sharp increase in the number of reserve cards issued.[24] This was undoubtedly due to the record number of loans in 1930, a figure which amounted to 590,852! Yet, the book stock only totalled 49,971 volumes! The number of loans in 1930 was more than 11 times the 1910 total of 52,676, yet over this period the book stock had not even doubled, being only 29,244 in 1910.[25] In his annual reports Bertie increasingly

21 Ibid. pp. 18-19

22 Annual Report 1929

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid. the A.R. gives a detailed account of reservations

25 Annual Report 1910

refers to the serious damage being done to the books and hence to their reduced life expectancy - a book in 1910 could be presumed to be borrowed 1.8 times during the year, but in 1930 each book would be presumably borrowed 11.8 times! In fact, the book stock which stood at 53,608 volumes in 1931, fell to 51,393 in 1932 to 50,517 in 1934 and 49,777 in 1935 largely due to wear and tear on the books. Moreover the fiction section suffered the most, with an average of 33 loan issues for each book in the section. since the fiction stock only amounted to 11,955 volumes in 1932, it was quite common for the Library to have as few as 200 books on its fiction shelves when it opened in the morning! "This unusual growth[in loans]", concludes Bertie, "is due to the prevailing business depression. With enforced leisure people are turning towards books as a means of recreation and instruction".[26]

Book loans continued to rise throughout the Great Depression, with 805,929 loans recorded in 1931 and 919,297 loans in 1932 - an all time record. A comparison was made in 1931 between the Sydney Muncipal Library and the Central Library of New York, on the basis of approximate services. The Central Library with a stock of 86,004 volumes, reached a total of 749,706 issues, while the Sydney Muncipal Library, with only 53,608 volumes, issued 805,929 books.[27]

26 Annual Report 1930

27 Annual Report 1931

This increase in the use of Libraries was a world-wide movement, and in England it was classed as 'phenomenal'. The President of the Library Association of Great Britain said at the time "... a little more money should be spent on libraries, sine in them more than in any other institutions men and women who cannot find work may find some sort of comfort and some use for their minds".[28]

Up to March, 1933 the output of loans were maintained at the same level as in 1932 but in April the output was 67,023 volumes compared with 76,036 in 1932, and for the remaining months of the year each month, with the exception of December, had a lower total than the equivalentmonth in 1932.[29]

Using the Library as a barometer it may be said that the financial depression was at its lowest between July, 1930 (when the loans jumped to 57,341 from 44,888 in the previous year) and April,1933 when the loans fell by 10,000 from the total of April 1932.

Furthermore the following table from the 1930 Annual Report gives an indication of the reading interests of the people of Sydney in the early 1930's:

28 Ibid.

29 Annual Report 1933

Subject	As a % of loan issues
Religion	1.91
Social Science	3.72
Science	2.78
Useful Arts	6.25
Fine & Recreative Arts	4.78
Literature	12.29
Geography & Travel	4.18
Biography	3.63
History	3.03
Fiction	40.52
Juvenile Section	14.55

All of the Annual Reports during the Depression indicate that the rapid rise in loans did not result in an abnormal use of fiction. In 1929 the percentage output of fiction was 39.35; in 1930, 40.52; in 1931 41.86; in 1932, 42.75 and in 1933, 40.75. As Bertie rightly concludes, "... during the Depression many people utilised their leisure for serious study and reading".[30]

30 Ilid.

Besides the poor physical conditions and the small size of the collection the Library also faced another severe handicap with the rise in the price of books published abroad, due to the excessive rate of exchange and primage and sales tax. This can well be illustrated by recording that a book published in London at 7/6 sold in Sydney in 1931 at 12/6. The result, says Bertie, has been that "a number of desirable books have not been added to the Library, as their cost was prohibitive".[31]

One slight improvement in the conditions of the Library came in 1932 when the Newspaper Room was moved downstairs to the first floor. This gave both the staff and readers greater comfort and space.[32]

The first extension to the Library's services was introduced in 1933, when 200 juvenile books were deposited at the Frank Saywell Kindergarten at Moore Park Recreation Centre. These books were exchanged at intervals, and so successful was the experiment, that in 1934 200 books were lent to the Devonshire Street Children's Club.[33] Further expansion occurred in 1937 and 1938 when Children's Libraries were opened at the Children's Playgrounds at Camperdown, King George V memorial Park and Moore Park. This was an important outreach to children who no longer lived in the vicinity of the Library, or who were unable to travel into the increasingly busy city by themselves.

31 Annual Report 1931

32 Annual Report 1932

33 Annual Report 1934

Chapter IV - Growing Awareness of the Importance of Libraries 1934-1939

At the request of Australia's Universities, The Commonwealth National Library, the State Public Libraries, State Education Departments and Library Associations of Victoria and South Australia, a joint survey of Australia's libraries was conducted by Ralph Munn, Director of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, and E.R. Pitt, Chief Librarian of the Public Library of Victoria. This survey, which covered all Library services in Australia - over 100 libraries were personally visited by Munn & Pitt and a further 1500 were sent questionnaires - was sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.[1]

In general "Australia has lagged behind in her development of libraries", wrote Munn and Pitt, "and failed to grasp the social value of public book services". In fact, libraries are regarded as "luxuries". Moreover that "the public library is an agency for popular education and culture, continuing the work of the schools and therefore deserving liberal public support, is a conception which is not yet accepted by the majority of officials or ratepayers".[2]

1 Munn, Ralph & Pitt, Ernest R. Australian Libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement. Melbourne:ACER, 1935.

2 Ibid. pp. 24-25

According to the two writers, one of the reasons for this lack of public support for public libraries lay in the historical fact that State libraries were founded alongside hundreds of small local libraries supported by literary institutes, mechanics' institutes and schools of art. These libraries were semi-private in character and open to subscribers only. Most of the earlier institutes received aid from the States, either in the form of a building site or money.

On the Sydney Municipal Library, the Munn-Pitt Report corroborated the views expressed by the Chief librarian in his Annual Reports. The Report describes the Library as follows:

"Sydney is the only one of the five major cities of Australia which maintains a rate-supported municipal lending library ...[and] ... deserved credit for assuming this responsibility in a country in which municipal support for libraries is still a rarity ... The Library is poor and small, but in proportion to its resources it is used as much as city libraries abroad ...[Housed] in cramped and unattractive quarters on the upper floors of a business building ... There are no branch libraries ... Nearly one half of the books are on loan at all times. Fiction comprised only 40% of the number of adult books lent, showing a high degree of interest in books of educational and informational value. The 7000 books in the children's section were lent so frequently during the year that their circulation almost reached 100,000 ... The success of the Sydney Municipal Library

in finding an interested clientele far greater than it can serve adequately, leads to the conviction that Sydney should establish a fully developed library system".[3]

Although the terms of the Report were hardly laudatory, the writers praised the Sydney Municipal Library for the "excellent work" in proportion to its resources, and for its "service to children", which is neglected throughout other Australian libraries. The two librarians also emphasised that a far larger allocation of money was needed to bring the stock up to standard, but they also indicated that part of the difficulty here lay in the fact that although the Library had to serve a population of 1,250,000 people, only 88,000 lived in the city area itself, and it was from this minority that all the Library finance had to come; in fact and analysis of the borrowers revealed that "over 60% of the borrowers live in the suburbs and pay no rates towards the support of the Library". They further noted that the Library restricted its reference collection to a "few quick reference" volumes, and made no attempt to supply sets of periodicals. In view of the excellent reference service provided by the Public Library of N.S.W., they felt that there was no necessity to alter this policy.

[3] Ibid. pp. 25-44

The Report also recommended the establishment of regional reference libraries and lending libraries, financially supported by State and Local Governments; networking where a major regional library carries out all technical services such as book purchasing, cataloguing and binding on behalf of branch libraries, and a state-wide inter-library loans service.[4] Much of their Reports recommendations were to be implemented in the following decade.

In 1935, a leading Australian librarian, John Metcalfe, also took up the cudgels of free public libraries, castigating the lack of an urban and rural library service. In England 1/- a head a year was expended on the National Central Library alone, compared with New South Wales where only threepence halfpenny a head of its total population was spent on all its library services. The Mechanics' Institute Libraries were in a state of "decay", having failed to transform themselves into "community centres"; while the "subscription" aspect acted as a "barrier" to those who are likely to make the best use of a library, "the unprivileged who seek to continue their education".[5]

At this time the Free Library Movement arose in Australia,[6] being founded in Sydney by prominent citizens and librarians, including many of the staff

4 Ibid. pp 44-45; 124-136

5 Metcalfe, John "The Public Library in Australia: present state and future prospects". Australian Quarterly Sept. 1935: pp. 16-21

6 The Free Library Movement Free Public Libraries. Sydney: Free Library Movement, 1936.

on the Sydney Muncipal Library. It was concerned that New South Wales spent £50,000 a year on libraries compared with £4 million a year on education and that Sydney only had one reference library and one public lending library (S.M.L.), with Broken Hill as the only country town with a free lending library. By holding public lectures and disseminating pamphlets advocating the establishment of free public libraries, its propaganda was instrumental in contributing to the passing of the Libraries Act in 1939. The Act established in N.S.W. joint State and local authority responsibility in the area of funding. Unfortunately the outbreak of war delayed its implementation until 1944.

With the advent of fascism and Nazism during the 1930's the Free Library Movement was very concerned about safeguarding our democratic way of life. The Movement stressed that free public libraries are for the "ordinary man on the street" so that he can gain access to the books and magazines "which will bring him the best possible information about the problems he confronts as a worker, a family man, and a citizen". Libraries are also "cultural institutions" providing "continuing education" in order to keep "citizens educated". "Democracy" wrote Charles Grattan, the visiting Americal Librarian, "is based ... upon

the theory that men are educable, and it is for that reason that democratic countries have supported free educational systems".[7]

Moreover the Librarian "will be the great question-answerer of the community ... and he will constantly endeavour to promote the asking of questions and the answering of them ... and since he is the servant of a democracy, he will educate democratically."[8]

In the midst of all this intellectual ferment, Frank Bell, the Deputy Librarian of the Sydney Muncipal Library was invited by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1937, to undertake a survey of major libraries in the U.S.A., Britain and Northern Europe on behalf of the Australian Council for Educational Research.

His report highlighted the fact that the Council of the City of Sydney proper, with a population of 87,770 and a per capita expenditure of almost 3/- on its libraries, has contributed more than its share to the provision of Library facilities, but that the Sydney Metropolitan Area needs £100,000 per annum spent on the provision of library facilities and the neglect of this activity was a glaring example of "Australian backwardness".[9] Bell provided some

7 Grattan, C.H. Libraries: a necessity for democracy Sydney: The Free Library Movement, 1938 pp. 7-10

8 Ibid. pp. 11-12

9 Report of Mr F.L.S. Bell, M.A. of the Sydney Municipal Library, on his return from a tour in the U.S.A., the U.K. and Norhtern Europe, carried out with the assistance of a Grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York,1937. Sydney: Syndey Muncipal Library, 1.12.1937 pp. 25 ff

interesting international comparisons on library funding:

City	Population	Library Expenditure	Library Expenditure per Capita of Population Serve[10]
Washington	486,869	$480,267	4/1½
Sheffield	520,500	£ 48,634	1/10½
Toronto	631,207	$488,665	3/2½
Liverpool	867,110	£ 70,316	1/7½
Glasgow	1,111,451	£100,536	1/9½
Birmingham	1,002,413	£ 78,179	1/6
Los Angeles	1,238,048	$1,108,988	3/8½
Sydney	1,267,350	£ 12,880	-/2½

Bell also recommended that as a means of linking the Sydney Municipal Library more firmly to the cultural life of the City, a library committee should be established, comprising aldermen, representatives from lay groups, the legal profession, the University, the Workers Educational Association and interestingly, the National Council of Women. He also proposed the upgrading of library personnel training, with the Leaving Certificate as a minimum qualification for professional appointment; better library publicity; the provision of a competent Inquiry Officer; a rural library service to be subsidized by the State and that the Sydney Municipal Library should serve only city residents.[11] As we shall see, many of his recommendations

[10] Ibid. p.24

[11] Ibid. pp. 23-24

were adopted in the following decade, including better trained staff, the upgrading of reader services assistance, better library publicity and improved funding.

The late 1930's saw a drop in the number of loans issued by the Library, owing to the easing of the Depression and hence more individuals now working and with reduced leisure time. The Library's poor funding meant that the stock of new fiction could not be kept up to date, while the advent of "eye-arresting and mentality-arresting periodicals now flooding the country ... plays havoc with the type of reading which free libraries exist to encourage ..."[12]

[12] Annual Report 1937

Chapter V - World War II

At the outbreak of War the Library's membership stood at 34,904 (33,015 members of the Central Library and 1,889 members of the Playground Libraries). Of these members, 15.25% were City borrowers whilst 84.75% were suburban borrowers. The average daily attendance in the Newspaper Room was 1500; hence, 390,000 people during the year consulted the 360 newspapers and periodicals on file.[1]

Loans began to dramatically rise from 530,019 in 1939 to 558,626 in 1940[2]. However, the Library was severely handicapped by shortages of all types of material, and the loss of shipments, although these difficulties were partly overcome by the introduction of the policy of purchasing all fiction books on the secondhand market. Also the introduction of a cheap but good class of book - the "Penguin" type - had considerable benefits.[3]

As in World War I, there was an increased demand for books on philosophy, religion, fine arts, natural sciences and technical works. "The increase in the proportion of scientific and technical works issued", wrote Frank Bell, "is in no doubt concomitant with the increase in facilities for technical education in this State. The metropolis is becoming more industralised and in order to meet this situation

1 Annual Report 1939

2 Annual Report 1940

3 Ibid.

more skilled workers are being trained - thus the rise in the proportion of technical works issued".[4] No doubt the war was also a spur to industrial development.

The Children's Playground Libraries continued to be remarkably successful; for example, although they were only open three hours on one afternoon a week, yet they loaned 20,000 volumes in 1939! Moreover, several schools in the metropolitan area commenced borrowing books from the Children's Room in batches of 50 to 100. These formed classroom collections and circulated as special collections in the school. In the same way, special loan collections of children's books were made to the Kindergarten Union and theChildren's Library Movement.[5]

In 1939 the Library widened its scope of reader services in an attempt to keep readers advised of the activities available in associated fields in the community. Courses run by the W.E.A. the A.B.C. Group Discussions, and the University Extension Board were featured, while the Federal Director of the Department of Information and the Commonwealth Publicity Officer both agreed to supply the Library with all the material published by their departments. Provisiion of community information is still a major aspect of this Library's function today. Frank Bell, who had suceeded Charles Bertie as City Librarian in August, 1939, was largely responsible for broadening the Library's services.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Annual Report [illegible]

The Library also began to build up a Reference File at the Inquiry Desk, dealing with current information about other States, and those countries bordering the Pacific. Pamphlets and official publications of other public and semi-public bodies were soon included in 1940, and every Tourist Bureau, Trade and Consular Representative in Australia was asked to donate regularly copies of any photographic or printed material relating to their States or countries.[6]

Bell also assigned a special officer to the Inquiry Desk, which previously had been staffed by assistants at the Circulation Desk. "The aim of the new service is, through personal guidance", claimed Bell, "to promote the full and understanding use of the Library by the borrower".[7] Folders on "How to Use the Catalogue" and "Information for New Borrowers" were also designed and printed, and a copy of each folder was handed to every new borrower on joining the Library.

A 'Monthly List of Books added to the Sydney Municipal Library' was also published during 1940 for distribution among officers of the Council and exchange with other libraries in Australia and abroad. A Newspaper Clippings File was kept in the Newspaper room, which provided information on the history of Sydney plus current affairs.[8]

6 Annual Report 1940

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

In the coming years subject guides on topics ranging from anthropology to music, retailing, window dressing and Parents and Children were published for readers. Reference inquiries rose sharply in 1945, especially by returning servicemen who sought information about courses of study and suitable post-war careers. The emphasis seemed to be on jobs which would take them out of doors such as deep-sea fishing, forestry, plantation-management and farming. The demand for books on home planning and building and arts and crafts was especially heavy. The Library during these years, also assisted the ABC in the preparation of reading lists connected with its educational broadcasts.[9]

Shortly after Japan's entry into the War, the Library altered its closing hour to 6.30 p.m. This measure was introduced partly because of the difficulty of blacking out the premises every night, and partly because it was felt that it would be unwise to encourage people to congregate in the Library after dark. The threat of air raids and submarine attacks appeared imminent. However, many munitions and factory employees do ing shift work found it difficult to visit the Library during the curtailed period of opening, so on 30th June, 1942 the Library reverted to its former closing hour of 9.00 p.m.[10]

[9] See Annual Reports from 1940 to 1945

[10] Annual Report 1942

Chapter VI - Branching Out 1946-1968

The ending of the War and the advent of peace saw loans drop by 7% to 450,415 in 1946, for people were now able to afford to purchase popular fiction owing to the rise in the level of community income. Also new libraries opened in the suburbs of Gordon, Mosman, Bankstown, Canterbury and Ryde.

Children's loans also fell with the increased inroads made on the leisure time of children by the cinema and the radio. It wasn't unti 1948 that loans started to rise significantly, from 426,355 in 1947 to 462,982 in 1948, when people began slowly resuming their reading habits after the War and with the increased leisure time now available with the introduction of a 40 hour week.[1]

However, the majority of enquiries at the Reference Desk, in contrast to the War years, now came from individuals rather than from government departments or commercial firms. Moreover by 1947 reference inquiries were changing from those of a vocational nature to those subjects concerned with private interests.[2] Still in 1948 the Reference Collection was being used by immigrants from England chiefly men looking for information about Australian industries and manufacturers. Average daily attendance in the Newspaper Room was still around 900 to 1,000.

1 Annual Reports 1946, 1948

2 Annual Report 1947

The Library was striving to fulfil the information needs of a community undergoing profound change and dislocation.

Unfortunately, the Library found itself severely limited by finances, and the City Librarian suggested that the annual estimate for books be increased by £250 per annum for the next 5 years, until the sum of £3,000 was reached. It was, he pointed out, an anomaly that although the price of books had risen by at least 50% since 1926, no provision for this had been made in the annual estimate.[3]

Nevertheless, the City of Sydney was the first muncipal council to adopt the 1939 Library Act, after its implementation had been delayed until 1944. Authorities adopting the Act are entitled to a State subsidy on condition that the library service is administered by the local council, that it is free to all (except that a charge may be made for fiction) and that certain minimum standards are attained. The Act envisaged the expenditure of 2/- per head of the total population on library services, and to this 2/- the State would contribute a maximum of 1/- and a minimum of 6d - the amount awarded to any particular authority being determined by how much is produced by a local rate levy of ¼d in the municipalities and 1/10th penny in the counties on unimproved capital value.

[3] Annual Report 1946

If this rate produces less than 1/-, the council must levy whatever rate is needed to produce 1/-, and the State will pay 1/-; if the rate produces more than 1/- the State will pay the difference between the amount raised and 2/-, except that if it produces more than 1/6 the State will, in any event pay 6d.[4]

The financial provisions of the Act were inadequate by 1949, and the Local Government and Shires Association of N.S.W. called on the Government to subsidize libraries on at least a £ for £ basis with a maximum subsidy of 3s. per head of population. The Association stated that post-war costs were much more than 2s per head. They argued that N.S.W. needed to spend 6s. a head on local library services, since administration costs were rising and acquisitions budgets declining. Libraries, stated the Association, "form an integral part of the education system and are essential if the benefit derived by children from their schooling is to be carried over into later life".[5] Unfortunately, for the time being their pleas fell on deaf ears.

4 McColvin, Lionel R. Public Libraries in Australia: present conditions and future possibilities. MUP, 1947 pp 33-35

5 Local Government Association of N.S.W. Library Act 1939 Statement of Local Government's Case for the review of the basis of subsidy payable to Councils by the State Government under the Act. Sydney: The Association, 1949 pp. 1-7

On 1st January, 1949, the Sydney municipality was reconstituted as the Council of the City of Sydney, and incorporated a number of previously independent inner-suburban municipalities with a resident population of 213,900.[6] In a climate of public opinion, which now favoured library development on an increased scale, largely due, as McColvin [7] indicates, to the inspiration of the Munn-Pitt Report, the financial assistance that came as a result of that report to establish the Free Library Movement, the Movement's work and the passing of the Library Act 1939; one of the first acts of the new Council was to request the Town Clerk to submit a survey on the possibility of installing branch libraries in the then vacant town halls of the constituent municipalities recently united in the inner city.[8]

The Town Clerk's Report recommended establishing branch libraries in the Paddington Town Hall, in the Alexandria Town Hall, a Juvenile Branch at the Splatt Playground, Glebe and that the Newtown Municipal Library become a branch library of the City of Sydney Public Library. On 7th February, 1949 the Sydney Municipal Library changed its name to the City ofSydney Public Library, and £17,800 was set aside in the Council's estimates for implementing the above projects outlined in the Town Clerk's Report.[9]

6 Annual Report 1949

7 McColvin, lionel R. op cit. p. 33

8 Annual Report 1949

9 Ibid.

At the same time, the City Librarian assumed the responsibility of sorting, classifying and arranging a large accumulation of technical periodicals, pamphlets, etc., which had collected over the years in the City Engineer's Department. On the completion of this task it was decided to establish a City Engineer's Reference Library on the third floor of the Town Hall. The City Librarian was made responsible for organizing the library, staffing it and ordering all books and periodicals used in the Department.[10]

In May 1949 the existing Newtown Municipal Library with its stock of 7,744 books and its 2,411 registered borrowers came under the control of the City Library. This event, together with the formation of the City Engineer's Reference Library, marks the first significant move in the establishment of the Library's branch building programme. With the introduction of branch libraries, the Cataloguing staff undertook the preparation of a Union Catalogue of the holdings in the Central branch and Playground Libraries, while the City Librarian assumed responsibility for all future acquisitions.[11]

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

The Newspaper room added significant overseas titles during this year to its collection, including the New York Times, London Daily Herald and The London Daily Express, which brought total newspaper holdings to 388. The following table indicates the composition of these newspaper holdings:[12]

N.S.W. Metropolitan	107
N.S.W. Country	141
Interstate & New Zealand	89
Overseas	51
	388

With the exception of the Sydney Morning Herald, all newspapers are kept on file for three months and then discarded.

On 5th July, 1950, the Denham Street (Surry Hills) Children's Library became a Juvenile Branch of the City of Sydney Public Library. Rapid progress in the establishment of more branches followed, with the Alexandria Branch opening in February, 1951, the Paddington Branch in December, 1952, the Surry Hills Branch on 19th May, 1956, the Glebe Branch in September, 1956, the Kings Cross Branch in February, 1959 and the Woollomooloo Branch in June, 1963.[13]

12 Ibid.

13 See the Annual Reports for these years

With the opening of these branches, loans circulation naturally rose during these years. The Central Library also benefited from the establishment of branch libraries because as the patrons of branch libraries became more skilled in reading, a proportion of them sought more advanced reading material and so became regular users of the Central Library.[14] Nevertheless the Central Library was catering to a different type of reader to that soon served by the branch libraries. The 1954 Annual Report indicates that 70% of the Central Libray's loans consisted of adult non-fiction, whereas this type of literature accounted for only 30% of books lent by the Branches. Novels only accounted for 16% of the Central Library's total issues, whereas fiction borrowed through the branches represented 36%, of the total. Moreover, only 14% of loans were children's books at the Central Library, whereas they were 34% for the same class of literature at the Branches. The Branches served large resident populations, while the Central Library catered to an adult non-resident clientele, a clientele "interested in using books as sources of useful information and/or educational tools", said Bell.

[14] Annual Report 1951

The Library continued its programme of encouraging good reading habits in the young and assisting in education by establishing more book deposit stations at Newtown Junior Technical High School, Newtown Public School, Enmore Activity School, Enmore Practice School, St Joseph's Girls' School, Golden Grove Convent School and the Erskinville Convent School. From these deposit stations 26,000 books were issued to children for reading at home.[15]

Periodical publications had proliferated in the 1930's and 1940's, so the Library in 1948 decided to make its periodical collection of over 300 titles available for loan. Some of its popular periodical titles are listed in the attached extract from the 1950 Annual Report. This move proved to be an immense success for periodical loans rose from 17,000 in 1949 to 32,100 in 1950, an increase of 88%. By loaning periodicals the Library was also aiming to substitute worthwhile periodical literature for the lighter forms of fiction, and in this move, the Library appears to have been successful for the 1950 and 1951 Annual Reports indicate rising periodical loans and falling popular novel circulation.

Funding of the Library improved greatly in 1952 when the State government subsidy in respect of the Council's expenditure on its library service was paid on a £1 for £1 basis up to a maximum of 1/6 per head of the population in the Council's area. Since the subsidy payable in respect of the Council's

[15] Annual Report 1950

The book supply position is quite satisfactory, our English orders coming through regularly and our smaller American orders being fully filled but not as promptly as we would wish. With regard to the importation of American books, the dollar situation has deteriorated and although several applications have been made for an increase in our Basic Quota, the matter is still under consideration by the Department of Trade & Customs.

Reference has been made in this Report to the increasing popularity of the new periodicals which have been purchased during the year. Over 300 titles covering a variety of subject fields have been made available for home reading and in order to give some idea of their range and quality, a selection of titles in two different fields has been made and appears below:

CURRENT AFFAIRS:

Australian Quarterly
Britain To-day
Current Affairs Bulletin
Current Notes on International Affairs
Current History
Economica
Economic Journal
Economic Record
Economist
Fortune
Future
Historical Studies
History
Impetus
International Conciliation
Keesing's Contemporary Archives
Look
Life
Listener
New Republic
New Statesman & Nation
Pacific Affairs
Partisan Review
Quick
Spectator
Time
Times Weekly
Time & Tide
United Nations World
Yale Review

CHILDRENS PERIODICALS

Australian Children's Pictorial
Australian Museum Magazine
Australian Stamp Monthly
Boys Own Paper
Childrens' Digest
Children's Magazine
Children's News
Children's Newspaper
Child Life
"Collins" for Boys & Girls
Council Fire
Excitement
Gibbon's Stamp Monthly
Guide
Hobbies
Junior
La Franco
Mainly About Animals
Meccano Magazine
Merry Go Round
Modern Miss
National Geographic
Our Boys
Pictorial Education
Pony
Popular Mechanics
Popular Science
Railways
School Nature Study
Scout
Sea Cadet
Storytime
Super Duper Boys Magazine
Teen & Twenty Magazine
Trains Illustrated
Walkabout
Young Musicians
Zoo Life

The Publisher's Association has issued an official statement that book prices will rise 20% during the coming year. Some indication of the meaning of this price rise in relation to the large number of books purchased by this Library during 1950 is shown by the following list of some expensive items purchased during the year.

library expenditure during 1951 was at the rate of 6d per head of the population (£5,285), the effect of the application of the new library subsidy was a threefold increase in the subsidy income for 1952, representing an extra amount of £10,570.[16]

With the arrival of non-English speaking immigrants in Australia after the Second World War, the Library attempted to meet their information and cultural needs, by developing a foreign language materials collection. Foreign language loans were averaging 600 to 700 a month in 1951 or 1.10% of total loans.[17]

In order to serve the needs of the business community a Scientific and Technical Department was established in a portion of the First Floor Newspaper Room on 27th September, 1952. Over 11,000 volumes dealing with all aspects of the pure and applied sciences were now available to the public in this department.[18]

On 7th December, 1955 the Mobile Library Service to the Infirm was inaugurated. Nearly 200 citizens took advantage of this service, which was provided by a van containing 481 books and 285 periodicals.[19] In the following year a Mobile Branch Library was also established to serve residents who did not live within the vicinity of a branch library.

16 Annual Report 1951

17 Ibid.

18 Annual Report 1952

19 Annual Report 1955

This service signed up 4525 members in 1959 alone, who in turn borrowed 117,000 books from a large van which contained 5,000 books and periodicals. Up to 30 persons at any one time could use the facilities inside the Mobile Library.[20]

By 1957 loans totalled 1,062,304, an increase of 25.2% on the previous year's figures and membership stood at 51,163 (38,726 adults and 13,037 juniors) & branch libraries accounted for over 50% of membership. Further book deposit stations had been established in schools and Police Boy's Clubs throughout the inner metropolitan area. Branch libraries now accounted for 63% of all loans and an inter-branch request service with weekly deliveries was also established.[21]

At the beginning of 1958 the Council also assumed control of the Sydney Information Centre, at the corner of Martin Place and Phillip Street, and the City Librarian became responsible for its administration. The centre was staffed from the Central Library and provided information on all aspects of Sydney, both for tourists and residents. It also served as a display and publciity centre for the Library, and the local information available there filled a long-felt gap in the City amenities.[22] Unfortunately

20 Annual Report 1956

21 Annual Report 1957

22 Annual Report 1958

in 1960 the Centre was transferred to the State Government as a Tourist Bureau activity.[23]

The following table outlines trends in reading over the past couple of decades:

Central Library:

Class of books	% of Total	No. of books issued[24]
	1939	1959
General	0.21	0.20
Philosophy	2.64	2.06
Religion	1.19	1.49
Sociology	5.32	5.48
Philology	0.56	0.77
Science	3.93	4.49
Useful Arts	7.99	8.62
Fine & Recreative Arts	6.72	7.33
Literature	14.77	5.99
Geography & Travel	6.95	5.26
Biography	4.05	2.64
History	3.99	6.62
Foreign text	0.78	2.32
Fiction	25.28	28.22
Children's Books	15.62	8.82
Periodicals	nil	9.69

23 Annual Report 1960

24 Annual Report 1959

Some highlights of the table are that linguistics accounted for only 56 out of every 10,000 books issued in 1939 whereas the figure stood at 80 in 1959. Foreign language books only totalled 78 out of every 10,000 loans in 1939 compared with 231 in 1959, while loans of history books doubled over this period probably dur to recent events such as the Second World War, the Depression, Korea, etc.

Circulation fell throughout the latter part of the 1960's due to several factors. In Newtown, for example, membership turnover was at least 50% each year, indicating the 'semi-permanent' character of the inhabitants. They were waiting for new homes in the outer suburbs and saving money by living in Newtown. Population was declining in the inner city, and as families left their dwellings were resumed for industrial purposes. In 1947 213,900 people lived in the inner city; in 1954 193,103 and in 1961 only 172,202 individuals.[25]

Similarly the number of inner city schools declined, while the number of school libraries and suburban municipal libraries increased, thereby reducing the number of School Book Deposit Libraries. Television was probably also impacting on reading habits and leisure time.[26]

[25] Official Year Book of New South Wales 1966. Sydney: Gov.Pr., 1967 pp 58-59

[26] See Annual Reports 1958, 1960, 1961

By overseas standards, according to Frank Bell, the City of Sydney Library was only working at half capacity. It should have been issuing two million books to 100,000 people - double the rate as of 1962. "Lack of a Central Library building worthy of this City", wrote Bell, "is the main reason why this Library is not meeting fully the reading requirements of its citizens".[27]

In 1963 Frank Bell died and John Lyons was appointed City Librarian. He, too, strongly advocated the building of a new Central Library "close as possible to the business heart of the community and to transport ... [since it] is a lending service, used by busy people in lunch hours and after work".[28] Unfortunately, the Central Library is still housed in a building totally unsuitable for library purposes and requirements.

The situation at the Branch Libraries, on the other hand, presented a varying picture of either decline or improvement. The Alexandria Branch's loans were declining owing to a poor physical location in the midst of growing numbers of factories. Paddington Branch was developing rapidly since the area was becoming a "desirable residential" location, while the Kings Cross Branch also thrived on a clientele made up of actors, artists, writers and many old well-to-do individuals, all of whom had a "taste for good literature". Out of 170,810 loans at the Kings Cross

27 Annual Report 1962

28 Annual Report 1964

Branch in 1962, 99,000 comprised works of fiction. Surry Hills Branch, on the other hand, suffered a slight decline in patronage owing to the influx of migrants whose library consciousness was "low".[29]

In 1967 the Local Government (City of Sydney Boundaries Act) was passed, which had a profound effect on the City of Sydney Public Library. The boundaries of the City of Sydney were redrawn, and its size reduced. As a result, the Newtown Branch was transferred to Marrickville Council; the Alexandria Branch and Bookmobile to the new Municipality of South Sydney; and the Glebe Branch was transferred to Leichhardt.[30]

29 Annual Reports 1962 to 1966

30 Annual Report 1968

Chapter VII - Recent Times 1969 to the Present

On 30th January, 1970, John Lyons retired from the position ofCity Librarian and his successor, Mrs Sarah Walters, was appointed to the position, which she still presently occupies.

John Lyons retired just days before the reopening of the Central Library in its new home at 473 George Street - at the Town Hall end of the Queen Victoria Building. For the first time in the life of the Central Library, instead of occupying five floors, the Library was located on one level, except for the bindery and stack collection. For the first time, too, the Reference area had a seating capacity of 40 persons. Moreover, the installation of a photocopying machine, and extra telephone, an office for the Research Librarian and the development of a map collection all helped improve the quality of reference service given by the Library.[1]

In March 1971 the Council opened an Advice Bureau. Located on the Ground Floor of the Town Hall and staffed by a member of the Library staff, the Bureau provides advice on a large range of subjects. Queries range from concert bookings, tourist information, inquiries about passports to aspects of services provided by the Town Hall. Mrs Walters even heard one person ask where he could rent a helicopter for the day! Presently, the Bureau receives on average, 100 to 150 queries a day. The Bureau has been of

[1] Annual Report 1970

special assistance to Europeans who frequently come to the Town Hall to register not only dogs, but often births, marriages and deaths. They find that many of the functions performed by the European Town Hall, are in this country the concern of state, federal or statutory authorities.[2]

Book loans in 1971 totalled 758,713, being issued from the following locations:

Central Library	454,024
Paddington Branch	86,926
Surry Hills Branch	53,960
Kings Cross Branch	124,580
Woollomooloo Branch	6,983
Mobile	12,855
Combined Playground Libraries	19,385

All of the Branch Libraries were suffering from the ongoing loss of their residential populations, as well as the rising number of non-English speaking residents who generally tend not to be oriented towards books and libraries.[3]

On 3rd May, 1974, the Haymarket Branch at 730 George Street, on the corner of Campbell Street, was opened by the Lord Mayor. This branch has specialised in acquiring Chinese language materials, and newspapers from Hong Kong, Peking and Taiwan are brought in daily. In its first year of operation, loans totalled 24,421 books and membership reached 1620 persons.[4]

2 Annual Report 1971; also an Interview held with Mrs Walters, City Librarian, on 10.8.87

3 Ibid.

The 1970's and 1980's saw the impact of technological change on the operation of the Library's systems. In December 1976 cataloguing and circulation were computerised using the 1173 PDP CLSI system. Microfiche catalogues were produced until June, 1986, when the LIBS 100 online public access catalogue system was adopted, thereby doing away with the traditional card catalogue.[5] Modules for serials and acquisitions are planned for some time in the near future. AMRS records are used in cataloguing with a small proportion of original cataloguing being done locally by the four professional libraries in the Cataloguing Department.

In 1982 the Waterloo Branch Library became part of the City of Sydney Public Library as a result of the amalgamation of the Sydney City Council with the South Sydney Council. The Waterloo Branch had operated from 1968 to 1981 as the South Sydney Municipal Library Service. During 1968/69 the Alexandria branch Library was closed and the present Library opened at Waterloo Town Hall in January, 1969. The Bookmobile with its twenty-seven stops was also incorporated in the new library service.[6]

5 Interview with Mrs Walters, opcit

6 The Newsletter 1 May 1982/City of Sydney Public Library p.7

Library membership, which had stood at 40,640 in 1974 reached 76,125 members in 1982. The latter figure was comprised of 46,819 Central Library members and 29,306 members in the Branches. In 1986 total membership had fallen to 59,507[7].

In 1982, the Central Library had to leave the Queen Victoria Building owing to the redevelopment of the site and move to 321 Pitt Street. The present site is totally unsuitable for a library and could explain the fall in library membership. The Library is presently housed on two floors, neither being on ground level. The main collection is located on the first floor, while the Newspaper room, Reference Collection and Inquiries Desk are located on the second floor. Seating space has been considerably reduced when compared with the Queen Victoria Building premises, and nearly 50% of the collection is housed in stack. However, in the near future the City Administration is planning to relocate the Central Library in a building of its own in Hunter Street.

Nevertheless, despite these poor physical conditions the Central Library's loans totalled 328,925 in 1986, and total circulation including the Branch Libraries amounted to 881,131 books.

7 Ibid. p.7 Also 1974 Annual Report and interview with Mrs Walters

Non-resident borrowers still account for over 90% of the Library's membership. The Children's section in the Central Library is mainly used by parents borrowing for their children, whereas children themselves patronise the branches in greater numbers.[8] According to Mrs Walters the number of reference inquiries has increased substantially over the past 10 to 15 years. The Newspaper Room probably serves at least 400 readers a day with its 151 titles. Major titles from around the world are brought in daily, including Le Monde, German Tribune, The Times, the New York Times and the Toronto Globe. The Serials Librarian also manages 454 periodical titles. Periodicals and newspapers are centrally ordered, processed and allocated by the Serials Librarian.

The Library is also responsible for the innovative publication called LOGOS, which is a weekly newsletter covering news topics either about Local Government or relevant to to Local Government. Newspapers published throughout Australia are scanned for this publication.

The Library is still attempting to meet the needs of special groups, such as the sight-impaired and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. It holds over 15,000 large print books and over 22,000 foreign language books; while its substantial holdings of business and economics texts, and its subscriptions to the Toronto Globe, Wall St. journal, Asian Wall St. Journal and Financial Times, are in accord with its

8 Interview with Mrs Walters

long tradition of serving the business community of the City. The Branch Libraries, on the other hand, are very much into supplying local community information to their residents. In 1986 a Branch Library was opened at Newtown and has proved to be a very successful venture.

The Bookmobile concentrates it services on specific areas, particularly Redfern, because of the absence of a Branch Library; and also on schools, council activity centres and Customs House Square at Circular Quay. The Service for the Housebound, which operates from the Waterloo Branch Library, is particularly successful, and caters to nearly 300 users.[9]

In 1986, the Library spent $375,000 on books, $67,000 on serials and $47,800 on non-book materials. With a budget of over $3 million, only $160,000 came from the State Government. (The Government subsidy is calculated on a rate of $1.80 per head of population, and the City has a resident population of 80,000 people.) However, this does not take into account the fact that this Library's users are mostly non-residents! Obviously the reports of bygone years calling on State Governments to fund public libraries on a $ for $ basis have fallen on deaf ears.

[9] Ibid.

Mrs Walters is anxious that the Library should more fully develop its service to the Sydney Council and hopes to eventaully appoint a Librarian to serve the information requirements of Council employees as well as access data bases suitable for the needs of Local government. Moreover with greater residential development within the City of Sydney's boundaries, the Library is aiming to capture these potential users by maintaining present services while enhancing collection development, particularly in non-book materials.[10]

The City of Sydney Public Library is still, after 70 years, a major institution in the life ofthis city. It is also probably the one service which Local Government has consistently delivered on an unbroken basis over this time. "Reading and the need for information, education, culture, and recreation through books is something fundamental in a fully developed, literate human being ..."[11] wrote Frank Bell, in 1950, and surely this has been and still is the chief service of the City of Sydney Public Library to the people of Sydney.

10 Ibid.

11 Annual Report 1950

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